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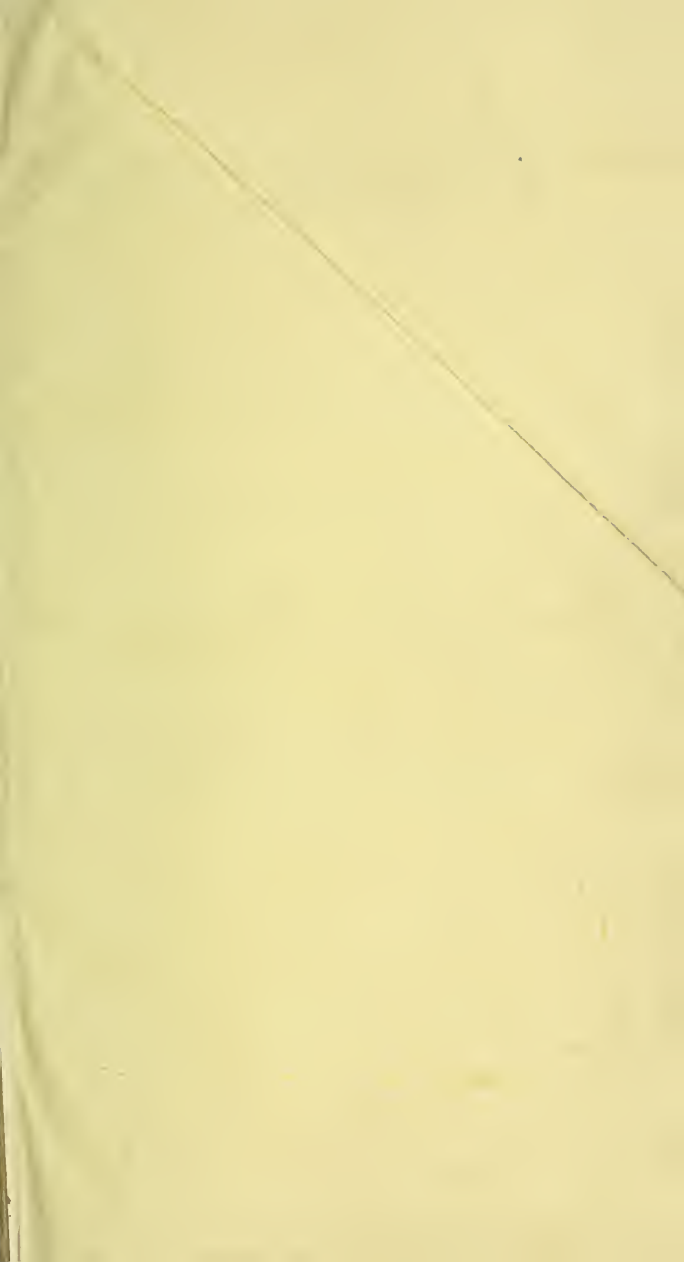


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KIRKSTALL ABBEY.



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# KIRKSTALL ABBEY.

AN

IMAGINARY POEM:

IN THREE CANTOS.

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BY

OSCAR SMYTHE LUSHINGTON.

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LEEDS:

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## PREFACE.

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IN presenting the following trifle to the public eye, the humble author places his hopes of success, not upon the merits of the work,—for he is well aware that they are of the slightest order,—but upon the motive which has urged him to make the venture, and the indulgence of his readers.

To the Inhabitants of Leeds and its vicinity the author must ever feel himself bound by the strongest ties of gratitude,—their generosity and liberal patronage having, even previous to the publication of the poem, bid fair to enable him to accomplish the most important step towards future prosperity, by furnishing him with the means of obtaining his emancipation from the ranks of the army, and thereby restoring him to his former station in society.

With an assurance that his untiring study henceforth shall be to convince his patrons that their generosity has been neither uselessly nor undeservedly conferred,

He begs respectfully to subscribe himself  
their obedient,  
humble,  
and obliged Servant,

THE AUTHOR.



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# KIRKSTALL ABBEY.

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## CANTO THE FIRST.

Where gentle Airedale's tranquil streamlet flows  
'Mid sedgy banks, where the wild pink-ey'd rose  
And fragrant honey-suckles fan the breeze,  
Which softly sighs among the rustling trees,  
And, bending gracefully, their blossoms lave  
With wanton kisses in the placid wave;—  
Where the blithe robin hops from spray to spray,  
And pours to Heaven his free and joyous lay,  
And the brisk bee scatters the sparkling dew  
From primrose-cups and nodding hare-bells blue;  
There, with its ruin'd bell tower rearing high,  
Pointing towards the smiling azure sky,  
And overlooking verdant vale and mead,  
Dappled with sheep and kine, and grazing steed,  
Stands Kirkstall's hallowed, grey, and crumbling  
pile,  
Where trav'lers often pause to gaze awhile  
Upon the shatter'd arch and ivyed wall,  
While thoughts of times long past the mind  
enthral.  
There have I lov'd to roam, and conjure up  
Those days when torch and sacramental cup

Glow'd on that altar, where now toad and snail  
Crawl o'er the stones, and leave their loathsome  
trail :—

When the high vaulted roof rang round and round  
With the rich organ's thrilling, holy sound :—  
When the long aisle, now mouldering to decay,  
Was trod by monks, while rose the matin lay ;  
Or the lone pilgrim, led by law divine  
To pay his homage at the sacred shrine.  
Those days have passed, and naught remains to  
tell

The tale, save tott'ring wall and weed-chok'd cell ;  
Yet still a hallow'd spirit seems to creep  
Around the sepulchres, where, wrapt in sleep  
Eternal, rest the bones of those who gave  
The voice of life to transept, choir, and nave.  
And tho' the ear can catch no floating breath  
Of choral chant amid those halls of death—  
Altho' the short view'd eye of man must fail  
To penetrate the cold grave's mystic pale,  
Imagination still may read a tale.

The sun had sunk behind the hill,  
And nature's busy voice was still,  
The latest bee had left the flower,  
The butterfly slept in the bower ;  
The blithest bird had ceas'd its song,  
And naught, except the myriad throng  
Of spotted moths and chaffers blind

Disturb'd the drowsy ev'ning wind.  
 The slimy snail and lazy toad  
 Crawl'd o'er the rugged, grassy road ;  
 And now and then a frighten'd hare  
 Sprang thro' the brake, and sought its lair.  
 Then all again was hush'd and still—  
 Save the grasshopper's chirrup shrill,  
 The corn-crake's distant lonely cry,  
 Or the chill night wind's mournful sigh.  
 In the far west, the orb of day  
 Still ting'd the clouds of leaden grey,  
 And spread an angry dusky glare  
 Throughout the silent realms of air :  
 And as it faint and fainter grew,  
 The sky assum'd a threat'ning hue.  
 Along the eastern horizon  
 The gloom of night came swiftly on ;  
 Pale sheets of lightning glimmer'd round,  
 And far away the boding sound  
 Of thunder came upon the breeze  
 Which sobb'd among the shiv'ring trees.  
 All told by tokens dark and drear  
 The dread Storm Demon hover'd near.

By Airedale's darkly gleaming tide  
 Two dusky forms were seen to glide  
 Among the hazels rank and tall  
 Which skirted Kirkstall's Abbey wall :  
 And as they slowly onward stroll'd,

Their earnest guarded converse told  
The speakers were De Lacey's heir,  
And his dark kinsman, Oswald Blair.

“ I tell thee, cousin Hildebrand,  
The Lady Helen's dowried hand  
Will ne'er be thine, if, like a child,  
Thou think'st to win by measures mild.  
Mark well my words—that hand's a prize  
Whereon a host of greedy eyes  
Already gloat; and there's among  
The strugglers in the rival throng  
A stranger knight, whose honour'd scars  
Proclaim a hero from the wars;  
And on his records proudly shine  
Bright laurels won in Palestine.  
On the young warrior, they say,  
Fair Helen smiles right graciously.  
I warn thee, and 'tis thine to prove  
How his suit may affect thy love.”

So spoke Sir Oswald, while his eye  
Glean'd 'neath his brow maliciously,  
As with a covert glance he scann'd  
The features of Sir Hildebrand.

“ Oswald,” Sir Hildebrand exclaimed—  
And while he spoke, his eye inflamed  
By mingled fury and alarm

Flash'd fearfully ; he grasp'd the arm  
Of Blair—"Oswald, now mark me well,  
If truth sustains what thou dost tell,  
At once my rival's name reveal,  
And, by my soul, this thirsty steel  
Shall drink his life's-blood ere the night  
Again gives place to morning light.  
But, if I find that thou hast strove  
By artifice to cross my love,  
And spot the lady Helen's fame—  
Then swear I, by my halidame,  
On thee shall fall my fury's storm ;—  
I'll crush thee as I would a worm !"

"Right bravely spoken !—I applaud  
Thy spirit ; but to think a fraud  
So dastardly, so base, could ere  
Invented be by Oswald Blair  
Is most unjust, and much I grieve  
That *thou* should'st deem I'd e'er deceive  
The man I love—In whose cause I  
Would gladly bleed, would freely die.  
However, Hildebrand, to prove  
My only wish is to remove  
This love-wrought blindness from thine eyes,  
All that within my power lies  
I'll freely speak. His name, I own,  
I cannot tell :—it is unknown  
To all I've questioned ; but they say

He owes his birth to Italy.  
But, listen : thou shalt quickly prove  
If there be truth in Helen's love.  
This very eve, within an hour,  
The lovers meet in Kirkstall's bow'r.  
Go, hide ye there, and let thine eyes  
Bear witness that I speak not lies."

They parted ; and Sir Hildebrand—  
His ire by jealous passions fann'd  
Almost to frenzy—bent his way  
To where the Abbey gardens lay.  
He reach'd a narrow, dusky glade,  
And paus'd beneath the deep black shade  
Of a tall yew. The thunder's roll  
Struck terror to his shrinking soul ;  
And when the lightning's vivid play  
Dispers'd the darkness transiently,  
The fitful glimmer made him start :—  
It seem'd as if around his heart  
A host of fear-fraught demons stood,  
And urg'd him to the deed of blood.  
" Revenge ! revenge !"—that fiendish cry  
Seem'd borne upon the night-wind's sigh.  
Just then a dark form caught his eye,  
As 'mid the gloom it hurried by  
His leafy covert. Quick as thought  
His trembling hand the dagger sought :  
Then stealthily, with scarce drawn breath

He trac'd its steps, until beneath  
 A thickly-woven copse it stay'd  
 And glanc'd along the dismal glade.  
 With noiseless steps the spot he neared ;—  
 But, lo ! the form had disappeared !  
 The knight peer'd round :—the lightning's glare  
 Just then burst forth, revealing where  
 A grass-chok'd, leaf-o'ershadow'd way  
 Branch'd off. A ruddy, trembling ray  
 Stream'd thro' a dark, sequester'd dell,  
 As from some hermit's lonely cell.  
 Onward he strode, and, like the hound  
 That scents its victim, crept around  
 And 'neath the gnarled trees. A sound  
 Of whisp'ring voices strikes his ear—  
 He stays his steps, and crouches near  
 A lowly hut ; the half-op'd door  
 Dimly reveals the fern-strewn floor :  
 And by the faint, uncertain light  
 A sickly lamp emits, a sight,  
 Which withers up his soul, he sees ;—  
 His very pulses seem to freeze :  
 For, 'mid the lurid, wav'ring glare,  
 A knightly form and lady fair  
 Stand closely lock'd in fond embrace !—  
 Vainly he strains his eyes to trace  
 Their features thro' the struggling gloom ;  
 But 'tis enough :—the stranger's doom  
 Is seal'd. The frantic Hildebrand

Feels well convinc'd the pair who stand  
Before his reeling, blasted sight  
Are Helen and the stranger Knight.

Anon, the Unknown left the cell,  
And hurried onward thro' the dell ;  
While, as the Indian tracks his foe  
With wolf-like subtlety—e'en so  
De Lacey hung upon his wake  
Thro' bush and briar, furze and brake,  
Until they reach'd the gloom-wrapt glade,—  
Then, darting from his leafy shade,  
He rais'd on high the gleaming blade—  
And struck—alas ! too true—too well,—  
His victim stagger'd—groan'd—and fell !

De Lacey for a moment stood  
And gaz'd upon the deed of blood  
With starting, fixed eyes, like one  
'Turn'd by some pow'rful spell to stone :—  
Then stoop'd him down, and drew a-side  
The mantle which had serv'd to hide  
The visage. Just then thro' the air  
The lightning shot with ghastly glare,  
And serv'd the assassin to discover—  
Great God !—that he had slain his brother !

One shriek—one horrid, piercing cry  
Rang thro' the darkly frowning sky.



With hands convuls'd he wildly clasped  
 His throbbing temples, while he gasped  
 Like some half-strangled wretch, for breath;—  
 It seem'd as if the hand of death  
 Already shook his palsied frame—  
 His eye-balls roll'd like globes of flame.  
 The lightnings flash'd—the thunder roared—  
 The spouting rain in torrents poured,—  
 The mighty winds, which until then  
 Had slept, like lions from their den  
 Now rush'd abroad, and howling forth  
 Their fear-fraught, all-destroying wrath,  
 Swept wildly thro' the groaning wood,  
 And dash'd the voerwhelming flood  
 In a fierce, sheeting deluge o'er  
 Hill, valley, woodland, mead, and moor.

Away the wretched Hildebrand  
 Rush'd like a hunted beast—a band  
 Of vengeful fiends appear'd to hang  
 Around him ; while the welkin rang  
 With goblin laughter, and the blast  
 Seem'd as it hurried madly past  
 To howl forth curses in his ear.  
 Denouncing voices far and near  
 Shreik'd thro' his whirling, frenzied brain—  
 “Fratricide !—Murderer !—Second Cain !”

## CANTO THE SECOND.

'Twas midnight ; and the moonlight pale  
Shone over woodland, mead and vale :  
And calmly fell the trembling beam  
Upon sweet Airedale's placid stream  
As onward flow'd the glassy tide  
In all its clear, unruffled pride—  
Save where, perchance, the nightfly's wings  
Spread circlets bright of crystal rings ;  
Or sportive trout, with sudden leap,  
Disturb'd the quiet water's sleep.  
All slumber'd—e'en the night-wind's sigh,  
And silence reign'd o'er earth and sky.

Beneath the cold and pallid ray  
Old Kirkstall's walls look'd lone and grey ;  
And cold the mullion'd casements gleamed—  
Save where, by clus'tring ivy screened,  
One low-brow'd lattice shed a bright  
Red beam upon the dusk of night :  
There had it glow'd since vesper bell,  
And mark'd the Father Martin's cell.

Shrouded by contemplation's guise,  
The Father sat with shaded eyes,  
And by the taper's wan light por'd  
Intently o'er the Sacred Word.

A mystery hung o'er that man  
Which tongue ne'er told, nor eye could scan.  
'Twas said, the Father erst had been  
A courtier gay—that pleasure's scene  
Had once acknowledg'd him, of all,  
The star at tilt and festival.  
That grief its cank'ring seeds had sown  
Within his heart, and weigh'd him down :  
But when, or whence the blight had blown,  
Apparently, to none was known.  
One dark autumnal ev'ning, late,  
He came to hallow'd Kirkstall's gate,  
Array'd in humble pilgrim's gear,  
And sought a sanctuary there.  
His only joy—his spirit's food—  
Seem'd constant pray'r and solitude :  
For, in his cheerless, lonely cell,  
From matin chime 'till curfew bell,  
He pass'd the hours day after day,  
With missal, cross, and rosary.

But those around him little guess'd  
What passions riv'd the Father's breast.  
E'en while the world's vain pomps he spurns,  
Deep, dark despair his vitals burns ;  
And while he scans the holy page,  
Far other thoughts his mind engage.  
The quiv'ring lip—the sunken eye—  
Now dimm'd—now flashing fitfully,

Tell the proud spirit finds no balm  
Amid Religion's hallow'd calm.  
In vain he kneels before the shrine—  
In vain he prays for aid divine :  
Oblivion cannot cast its shade  
O'er the deep stain gone time hath laid  
Upon his soul ; and, day by day,  
The world asserts its sov'reign sway.

But, hark ! a sound, like beating rain,  
Assails the narrow casement pane.  
The recluse starts : right well he knows  
The signal, and his cassock throws  
More closely round his wasted frame ;  
Then shades the flick'ring taper's flame,  
And, while booms forth the midnight knell,  
With noiseless steps he quits his cell.

Assisted by the sickly ray  
The Father Martin wound his way  
Thro' passages where light of day  
Was never known to fall :  
Where gloom and damp hung all around  
And low-brow'd arches o'er him frown'd,  
Nor tarried 'till he trod the ground  
Beneath the cloister wall.

Deep midnight shadows fell upon  
Grey pillar and moss-cover'd stone—

Save where a broad cold moonbeam shone  
     In a still, silv'ry flood  
 On the moist, glist'ning flags ; and there,  
 Amid the pallid, spectral glare  
 A cloak-wrapt form, of martial air,  
     Like a dark statue stood.

The Stranger mark'd the wav'ring flame,  
 As t'wards the spot the recluse came ;  
 And, bending forward, breath'd a name  
     Which, like some potent charm,  
 Fell on the Father's startled ear ;  
 His knees collaps'd and shook with fear,  
 While with quick strides th' unknown drew  
     near,  
     And grasp'd him by the arm.

“Ye know me not,” the figure cried,  
 In accents deep—then cast aside  
 The mantle which had serv'd to hide  
     His face from idle gaze.  
 The Father strove in vain to fly—  
 He quail'd as 'neath a spectre's eye,  
 And gave a wild, unearthly cry  
     Of terror and amaze.

“Oh, God !” he falter'd, “has the tomb  
 Re-op'd its dark and loathsome womb,

And yielded up its dead to call  
For vengeance on the criminal :  
Have the dread pangs of grief intense ;  
The prayers deep of penitence ;  
A soul by endless suff'ring riven  
Fail'd to appease the wrath of Heaven ?”

“ De Lacey, list !” the Stranger said,  
“ Thou lookest not upon the dead,—  
'Tis I—thy brother, Ethelred !”

“ Almighty God !” De Lacey gasped,  
While round his brother's neck he clasped  
His trembling hands in close embrace—  
“ I thank thee for thy bounteous grace !”  
He said no more—joy and surprise  
O'ercame his shaken faculties ;  
And with a burst of idiot mirth  
He swoon'd upon the dewy earth,

\* \* \* \* \*

When he revived, with swimming eyes  
He gaz'd around in mute surprise.  
Within a rough-built hut he lay,  
The roof of reeds, the walls of clay ;  
His bed a heap of moss and fern :—  
A flickering lamp which seem'd to burn  
More to betray the murky gloom

Than to light up the narrow room,  
 Stood on a bracket by his side.  
 His brain span round, in vain he tried  
 To muse and call to mind aright  
 Th' adventures of the by-gone night.

While thus he lay confus'd, he thought  
 His ear a distant murmur caught :  
 He listen'd, and again the sound,  
 Like ringing laughter, echoed round.  
 With noiseless step he left his bed,  
 And search'd around the humble shed.  
 A rush-wove mat soon caught his eye,  
 Hanging upon the wall, close by :  
 Again loud laughter smote his ear,—  
 Just then a passing gust of air  
 The rude mat slightly rais'd,—a bright,  
 But transient gleam of ruddy light  
 Shot brilliantly athwart the gloom,  
 As from a secret inner room ;  
 De Lacey gently drew aside  
 The dangling curtain, and descried  
 By a huge log-fire's cheerful blaze  
 A scene which fill'd him with amaze.

Within a spacious cave, the sides  
 Of which were hung with red deer hides,  
 Bow, quiver, hunting-knife, and spear,  
 And all that form'd the huntsman's gear,

Some twenty stalwart men were seen  
All clad in frocks of Lincoln green.  
They sat around a rough-hewn board  
With smoking venison amply stor'd,  
And tankards bright of foaming beer,—  
A goodly spread of English cheer.  
The joke, the laugh, the merry song  
Went briskly round the jovial throng :  
For them in mirth Time dipp'd his wings,  
And they were happier far than kings.

While he look'd on with wond'ring eyes,  
A figure, clad in hermit's guise,  
With cassock grey, and sable hood,  
Approach'd the door-way where he stood.  
De Lacey mark'd the figure well,  
And gliding back into the cell,  
He sought again his lowly bed :  
Anon, with stealthy, noiseless tread,  
The black-cow'd Anchorite appeared,  
And cautiously the pallet neared.

“ Sir Hildebrand,” he softly said,—  
De Lacey slowly rais'd his head,  
As if but then arous'd from sleep,—  
“ Sir Hildebrand, I need not keep  
Thee longer in suspense and pain,  
But briefly will at once explain  
All that has happen'd since that night



So deep with grief and blood bedight.  
But, stay—thy brother bade me say  
He waits thy summons anxiously ;  
And, see ! e'en now he comes this way."

With eager steps young Ethelred  
Drew near De Lacey's humble bed.  
He wore a garb of Lincoln green,  
Such as Sir Hildebrand had seen  
Worn by the band of Rangers bold  
Carousing in their secret hold.  
He was a gallant youth, o'er whom  
Scarcely twenty years had shed their bloom ;  
And comelier form, or nobler mein  
Adorning manhood ne'er was seen.

" Ethelred," cried Sir Hildebrand,  
Grasping his brother's proffer'd hand,  
" I do implore thee to believe  
How deeply, bitterly I grieve  
That jealous vengeance, dark and deep,  
Should have impell'd my soul to steep  
Itself so fearfully in guilt.  
But, the compunction I have felt—  
Even before I came to know  
On whom had fall'n the treacherous blow—  
Has prov'd to me a living hell:  
Each matin chime—each vesper bell  
I've wish'd had been my funeral knell.

And, oh ! how zealously I've striven  
T' appease the wrath of anger'd Heaven  
By mortifying flesh and soul,  
To Him who doth our fates controul,  
Is only known. But list, while I  
Relate a tale of treachery  
As foul, as deep as e'er possess'd  
A villian's, or a demon's breast.

“ One eve, a private message came,  
Sign'd with our kinsman Oswald's name,  
Conjuring me, within an hour,  
To bend my steps to Kirkstall's bow'r,  
Where he would meet me, and disclose  
Certain intrigues of secret foes.  
Promptly the summons I obeyed,  
And, when the twilight fell, I strayed  
Down by dark Airedale's quiet stream :—  
A storm was rising, and the gleam  
Of vivid lightning thro' the wood  
Soon show'd where Oswald, waiting, stood.  
There he, in an accursed tale,  
Denounc'd the Lady Helen frail—  
Told me that she had broke her plight,  
By favouring a stranger Knight:  
And having wrought my tortur'd soul  
Beyond the bounds of all controul,  
He then, by well tim'd argument,  
Protested that the punishment

Such flagrant insult called for, should  
Be written in my rival's blood.

“ Stung to the quick, in fiercest wrath,  
I madly chose the fearful path  
The arch-fiend open'd to my view.  
He then, to prove his statement true,  
Told me, upon that very night,  
Fair Helen and the stranger Knight  
Met at their fav'rite trysting spot,—  
By vengeance spurred, that spot I sought,  
I watch'd, and soon a dusky form  
Loom'd 'mid the glimmering of the storm.  
I track'd it to a lonely dell,  
And there, within a humble cell  
A feeble, struggling taper's light  
Dimly reveal'd to me a sight  
Which seem'd to sear my very heart,  
And cause my burning eyes to start:  
I saw a lovely female form  
Reclining on a warrior's arm.  
I waited not to mark them more,  
But hurried from the half-clos'd door:—  
That glimpse, I felt, suffic'd to prove  
The blight of all my hopes, and love.

What follow'd I can scarce relate:  
With throbbing brain did I await  
My fancied rival's coming forth.

Anon he came; and with the wrath  
Which madden'd fiends alone can feel,  
Deep in his breast I plung'd my steel.  
'Twas then—alas! too late—I found  
My brother stretch'd upon the ground!—  
With horror dumb, aghast I stood—  
I saw him weltering in his blood—  
I stagger'd—shriek'd—and fled the spot,  
But whither I remember not.  
But little more have I to tell;—  
Within a hermit's lonely cell,  
When consciousness return'd, I lay,  
And a good Friar attentively  
Bent o'er me as I op'd my eyes:—  
I glar'd around in mute surprise.  
An indistinct, but fear-fraught gleam,  
Like traces of some frightful dream,  
Shot o'er my mind, as meteors fly  
With wild flash, through the midnight sky.  
The Father sooth'd and sought to calm  
My agony with the soft balm  
Religion yields; but vainly strove:—  
Remembrance of the past night drove  
Me almost frantic; and I felt  
To ease my conscience of its guilt,  
My fearful crime must be confessed;  
But ere my purpose was expressed,  
By gentle hints the Father threw,  
I found that he already knew

My hand had done the horrid deed ;  
 And he conjur'd me to proceed  
 Without delay to Kirkstall's shrine,  
 And there beseech the Pow'r Divine,  
 By fasting, penitence, and pray'r,  
 To shrive my soul. With Christian care  
 He then prompt preparation made,  
 And soon, in pilgrim's guise array'd,  
 I gladly sanctuary sought  
 Within the hallow'd gates ; but naught  
 That Abbey-wall or shrine could yield  
 A conscience so enstain'd could shield  
 From the keen tortures of remorse,  
 Which each day gave augmented force.  
 The worthy Friar each ev'ning came,  
 Imploring me, in Heaven's name,  
 Not to give way to dark despair,  
 But hope, and trust in God, who ne'er  
 Forsakes the truly penitent,  
 However deep with crime besprent.  
 But hope, I felt, had fled for aye  
 My wither'd heart ; and from that day  
 Until th' events of yester-e'en,  
 My weary hours of life have been  
 A raging, overwhelming sea  
 Of care and ceaseless misery."

" My brother," cried young Ethelred,  
 Most cruelly wert thou misled :

A deeper, or more heartless plan  
Never disgrac'd the name of man.  
That traitor, Oswald, thought, 'tis plain,  
A rich inheritance to gain  
By crushing with his hellish snares  
De Lacey's rightful, lineal heirs.  
But let me now succinctly tell  
What led me to the Hermit's cell  
Upon that fated, luckless night,  
That all may be explained aright.

“Thou knowest well 'twas my design  
To sail, ere long, for Palestine,  
And with my chosen warriors swell  
Our ranks against the Infidel.  
The Lady Hermione de Grey—  
Whom how I love I need not say—  
Beneath her watchful guardian's care  
Was so constrain'd she scarce could e'er  
Elude his vigilance an hour  
To meet me in old Kirkstall's bow'r.  
Yet did we meet, tho' seldom, and  
Knowing that for the Holy Land  
I shortly must depart, we plann'd  
That night to meet within the dell—  
Our trysting-place the Hermit's cell—  
To plight our vows, and bid farewell.  
How that dark villain, Oswald, came  
So true a knowledge to obtain

Of our assignment, is to me  
Impenetrable mystery."

"Methinks that I have power, Sir Knight,  
Upon this point to throw a light,"  
Exclaim'd the Friar:—then cast away  
His pilgrim's garb of sober grey,  
His silv'ry beard, and sable hood—  
And, lo! before their eyes there stood  
A powerful man, of gallant mein,  
Clad in a frock of hunter's green.  
Sir Hildebrand, with mute amaze,  
Bent on the Forester his gaze,  
Doubting that he beheld aright  
In him the former Anchorite.

"Sir Hildebrand De Lacey, thou  
Canst not but be surpris'd, I trow,  
To find beneath such priestly gear  
A hardy chaser of the deer.  
This proves, howe'er, we must not deem  
All men precisely what they seem,"  
Continued he in cheerful tone,—  
"In truth, Sir Knight, thou look'st upon  
The outlaw'd Earl of Huntingdon.  
My fame, no doubt, thou oft hast heard  
Proclaim'd: and tho' it is averr'd  
That I'm a robber:—'tis my boast  
That tho' some few broad coins are lost,

And now and then a good fat deer  
By haughty rich ones, 'twill appear  
That while I tax their ample store,  
I ne'er oppress or fleece the poor ;  
But ever lend a helping hand  
To all who chance in need to stand.  
But mark me:—oft I take delight  
In wandering abroad, bedight  
In monkish garb ; and few can tell  
The ruse ; I grace the cowl so well.  
I' faith a Bishop oft has seen  
Me thus, and none the wiser been  
Until I lighten'd up his soul  
By forcing him to pay my toll ;  
And hinting that his Lordship stood  
Upon the see of Robin Hood.

“ 'Tis now some three moons past and gone  
Since I resolved to taste the fawn,  
And well-fed game of flood and field,  
Which Kirkstall's fat lands ever yield.  
Oft-times before had I been here,  
And feasted on fowl, fish, and deer ;  
Therefore, I knew right well that I  
Could not but fare right royally.  
So, choosing out some twenty men—  
Rare jovial comrades—to this glen  
I straight repair'd, resolv'd to stay  
And spend the winter merrily.



“ One eve, it chanc’d, that having stroll’d  
 Beyond the bounds of Kirkstall’s fold,  
 In Ranger’s gear, with bow in hand,  
 I enter’d on Sir Oswald’s land ;  
 And soon, from ’neath a shrub-crown’d crag,  
 Sprang forth a noble spotted stag.  
 My bow I in an instant drew,  
 And, swift as thought, the arrow flew—  
 It pierc’d its heart—and, with a bound,  
 The beast fell bleeding on the ground.  
 But scarcely had I reach’d the spot,  
 When I was grappled by the throat  
 By two stout Foresters ; and tho’  
 I spar’d not either word or blow,  
 They prov’d themselves right hardy blades,  
 And dragging me thro’ groves and glades,  
 Soon clos’d on me the castle gate,  
 And led me where Sir Oswald sate.  
 My crime made known, with boding frown,  
 He bade my gaolers bear me down  
 Into the dungeon, there to bide  
 His pleasure, ’till he should decide  
 Upon such punishment as he  
 Should deem sufficient penalty.

“ Some three long hours had pass’d away,  
 When, as within my cell I lay,  
 Reflecting on the by-gone day,  
 A cautious foot-fall struck my ear,

And presently a hand, with care,  
Withdrew the bolts which bound my door—  
A dim light stream'd upon the floor—  
I sprang upon my feet, and there  
Before me stood Sir Oswald Blair.

“ Briefly, he came to tell that I  
Must hold myself prepared to die,  
Unless I would at once consent  
T' avert th' impending punishment,  
By ridding him of one, whose life,  
To him, with bitterness was rife.  
A rival with success had strove  
To steal from him a maiden's love.  
A menial had, by stealth, convey'd  
The tidings, that beneath the shade,  
Of Airedale's lonely hazel bow'r,  
Next eve they met at twilight hour.  
He offer'd me the alternative—  
To swear to do the deed, and live ;  
Or to reject his clemency,  
And the next morn, at sunrise, die.

“ But little time I took to muse  
Upon the course I ought to choose.  
His foul proposal with deep scorn  
I shrunk from ; and my answer, borne  
In words his heart could ill sustain,  
Told how completely he'd mista'en,

The principles of him who lay  
 In durance 'neath his tyranny.  
 He spoke no more ; but, with a scowl,  
 Which told how winc'd the villain's soul,  
 Quitted the cell : and wrapt in gloom,  
 I waited my impending doom.

“ The rising moon beam'd forth, anon,  
 And thro' the dungeon grating shone :  
 With listless eye, upon the wall  
 I watch'd the clear cold radiance fall ;  
 'Till, presently, the light revealed  
 A glittering object, half concealed  
 Behind a jutting stone. A thought  
 Shot thro' my brain,—with speed I sought  
 To prove how far I judg'd aright—  
 With trembling hand a pressure slight  
 I laid upon the spot—and true  
 To my suspicion, backward flew  
 A small slab from the dungeon floor,  
 Discovering an iron door.  
 The rusted latch I wrench'd away,  
 And, with a light heart, grop'd my way  
 Along a passage damp and dark ;  
 And, ere long, I beheld a spark  
 Fitfully gleaming from afar,  
 Like some predestin'd guiding star.  
 Sway'd by alternate hope and fear,  
 With careful footsteps I drew near

The spot : there, plainly, once had been  
A secret door-way ; and between  
The rude-built mass of rock and clay  
Which chok'd the outlet, a faint ray  
Stream'd far above me thro' a breach,  
Which vainly I essay'd to reach.  
Still hard I clamber'd, and, at length,  
By dint of care and sinewy strength,  
I well nigh gain'd the chink—when down  
The ponderous, crumbling mass was thrown  
With a loud crash beneath my weight ;  
And when I stagger'd to my feet  
I stood within my own retreat !

“ Thus having, by a lucky chance,  
And the good will of Providence,  
Escap'd the clutches of the fiend,  
I readily, with reason, deem'd  
That tho' he'd fail'd in the attempt  
To gain my aid, he'd ne'er content  
His vengeful soul, until grim death  
Had seal'd his hatred rival's breath.  
Accordingly, I studied how  
I might avert th' impending blow.  
I soon determin'd to repair  
Next eve to Kirkstall's bower, where  
The lovers plann'd to meet, and there  
Impart the danger hovering nigh,  
And warn them, for their lives to fly.

“ With this intent, at night’s dark hour,  
 In Hermit’s garb, I sought the bower :  
 But ere I reach’d the spot, a cry  
 Of fearful wildness rent the sky.  
 In the direction of the sound  
 I hasten’d swiftly on, and found  
 A wounded youth stretch’d on the ground,  
 Lifeless, and weltering in blood ;  
 While over him th’ assassin stood.  
 But scarcely had I reach’d the scene,  
 When, as if waking from a dream,  
 The perpetrator of the deed  
 Rush’d down the glade with maniac speed.  
 A portion of my trusty band,  
 Who hover’d nigh, at my command  
 Sprang from their covert in the wood,  
 And close the fugitive pursu’d ;  
 While I, with two stout comrades’ aid,  
 The fallen youth to our cave convey’d.  
 But little more I need to say :  
 Long ere the dawn of coming day,  
 Apt remedies with skill applied  
 Had staunch’d life’s swiftly ebbing tide.  
 Few words suffic’d for him to tell  
 ’Twas by his brother’s hand he fell :—  
 He mark’d thy visage ’mid the light  
 The storm-flash shed upon the night ;—  
 And I, at once, became full well  
 Convinc’d that some infernal spell,

Concocted by dark Oswald's brain,  
Had tempted thee thy hand to stain  
By lifting it, with vengeance rife,  
Against thy only brother's life.

“ But little did I dream that there  
Lay in the brain of Oswald Blair  
So deep a mine of treachery ;  
For know, Sir Hildebrand, that he  
Already has, with grasping hands,  
Usurp'd thy noble rights and lands :—  
And altho' formerly he'd plann'd  
To gain the fair and dowried hand  
Of Lady Hermione De Grey,  
His eye now gloats on richer prey ;—  
His curst ambition covets now  
The daughter of De Poitou.  
The Baron, blinded by his wiles,  
Upon his suit approving smiles :  
But Lady Helen deeply mourns  
Thy fancied loss, and proudly scorns  
Sir Oswald's suit ; and tho' her sire  
Threatens her with his lasting ire  
If she declines perversely still  
To yield submission to his will,  
No threats her firm resolve can move,  
Or swerve her from her former love.

“ Upon Sir Oswald's plottings I

Have kept a close and watchful eye.  
 He spread abroad an artful tale,  
 Which to gain credence did not fail,  
 That bitter enmity had sprung  
 Betwixt his kinsmen, from some wrong  
 Sir Ethelred had heap'd on thee;  
 And, in the heat of enmity,  
 That thou hadst slain Sir Ethelred,  
 And from thy native country fled.

“ My followers, who on thy track  
 Had vainly sped, ere long came back ;  
 And with no tidings could I meet  
 To give a clue to thy retreat,  
 Until, by chance, the other night  
 I mark'd an aged Anchorite  
 Gliding among the hazels tall  
 Which skirt the Abbey-cloister wall.  
 Some pebbles by his hand were thrown  
 Against a lattice, whence forth shone  
 A feeble light ; I watch'd with care,  
 Longing to learn what brought him there.  
 He enter'd by a secret way—  
 I follow'd, and in ambush lay  
 Behind a pillar.—Presently,  
 Bearing a lamp, a Monk appeared,  
 And as my hiding-place he neared  
 The features I could plainly trace ;  
 And in that haggard, care-worn face,

Where naught, save suffering, seemed to live,  
I saw the long-sought fugitive.

“ I trac’d the Hermit to his cell,  
Within a deep sequester’d dell;  
And, blinded by my priestly gear,  
The good man told me, without fear,  
How, on a dark tempestuous night,  
Like a wild, conscience-tortur’d sprite,  
Thou rushed’st thro’ his half op’d door,  
And senseless fell upon the floor:  
How from thy ravings he had gained  
A knowledge that thy hands were stained  
By some mysterious, bloody deed:  
How he’d advis’d thee to proceed  
To Kirkstall’s hallow’d shrine, and there  
Atonement make by fast and pray’r.  
Thy brother here, altho’, as yet,  
Scarce strong enough his couch to quit,  
On hearing my discovery,  
Resolv’d, without delay, that he  
Next eve, in company with me,  
Would to the cloister-court repair,  
And dissipate thy dark despair.  
What follow’d, I’ve no need to tell:  
Thank Heaven, all, so far, is well.

“ But the catastrophe draws nigh,—  
To crush Sir Oswald’s villainy



Sir Ethelred and I have plann'd  
A scheme. To thee, Sir Hildebrand,  
To-morrow morn we will explain :  
All things are now in perfect train.

“ But come, the hour is waxing late,  
Our presence my blithe comrades wait ;  
Cheer up, Sir Knights, forget all care,  
And join us in our homely fare.”  
The brothers grasp'd each other's hands  
With thankful hearts—Sir Hildebrand's,  
So late by hopeless anguish riven,  
Seem'd lifted to the realms of Heaven.

But here we leave the twain to greet  
The Foresters in their retreat,  
And feast on venison and ale  
While we pursue our humble tale.

## CANTO THE THIRD.

Sir Oswald sate in his gloomy hall  
As the shades of night began to fall :  
Now darkly he scowl'd—now a fiendish smile  
O'erspread his sinister features, while  
By fits and starts he cast his eye  
Towards the door impatiently.  
'Twas seldom Oswald Blair was seen  
So to relax his frigid mein.  
As the volcano fiercely glows  
Amid perpetual frost and snows,  
So, 'neath his cold exterior,  
Dark passions wag'd continual war  
Within his heart ; and hellish schemes  
Beset his day-thoughts and his dreams.  
But scarcely ever aught betrayed  
In look or word the plots arrayed  
Against his foes with deadly mark.  
Yet now an agonizing spark  
Of apprehension sear'd his breast  
Like heated iron. He could not rest  
Assured that De Lacey's heirs

Were safely trammell'd by his snares.  
 He felt assured that Hildebrand  
 Had raised his vengeance-tempted hand  
 Against his brother. In the glade  
 The blood-stain'd grass full well betray'd  
 The perpetration of the deed ;  
 But then he never could succeed  
 In finding where the corse was lain ;  
 All his research had proved vain.  
 This state of vague uncertainty  
 Tortur'd his conscience night and day.  
 A dark misgiving, fraught with fear,  
 Constantly whispered in his ear  
 That retribution hovered near.  
 'Twas galling thus to find the goal  
 Whereon his dark, ambitious soul  
 For years its proudest hopes had built  
 Their pinnacle 'mid foulest guilt,  
 Constantly threatening to sink,  
 And topple o'er destruction's brink.

Three moons had wasted since that night  
 With treachery and blood bedight,  
 When the De Lacey's disappeared ;  
 And quickly now Sir Oswald neared  
 The climax of his guilty pride :  
 Fair Helen was to be his bride.  
 That night, by her stern Sire's command,  
 She was to yield to Blair her hand.

As in his hall, absorbed by thought,  
He sate, his ear a footfall caught;  
And presently, with gentle tread,  
A youthful Page came in :—he said,  
“ Sir Knight, the hour is waxing late,  
Th’ assembled guests impatient wait  
Your presence,—so they bade me tell.”  
“ I come,” replied the Knight; “ ’tis well.”  
Then, rising with a nervous start,  
He strove to rouse his blenching heart.  
“ What means this cowardice,” he cried  
With bitterness, “ I would deride  
Such fears within a woman’s breast :  
Why cannot I securely rest  
In peace upon my deep-laid plan ?  
Rouse—rouse thee, Oswald, be a man.”  
Then snatch’d his rapier from the wall,  
And hurriedly strode from the hall.

\* \* \* \* \*

’Twas midnight ; and the dazzling blaze,  
Created by the flashing rays  
A hundred tapers gave,  
Illum’d the Abbey Chapel, where  
A host of Knights and Ladies fair,  
Assembled in the nave,  
Welcomed a gorgeous bridal throng,  
As gallantly it moved along  
The lofty, echoing aisle.

Sir Oswald near the Altar stood,  
 And as th' approaching group he view'd,  
     With a triumphant smile  
 His gloomy features were o'erspread :  
 His lip curl'd proudly as he sped  
     To greet his noble Bride.  
 With haughty step the Maiden came,  
 While from her eyes beam'd forth a flame  
     Of mingled scorn and pride.  
 The Knight essay'd her hand to clasp ;  
 But, shrinking from his proffer'd grasp,  
 As tho' a death-infusing asp  
     Had wound its fearful coil  
 Around her snowy arm, she cried—  
 "Traitor ! stand back ! or else abide  
 The wrath of one, who, near thy side,  
     Thy foul intents to foil,  
 Now hovers :—aye, well may'st thou quail—  
 Well may thy cheek turn ghastly pale.  
 Villain ! mark me—the time hath come  
 For God and Man to seal thy doom !"

As a tree, shiver'd by the flash  
 Which heralds the fierce thunder's crash,  
 Vibrates and totters ere its fall,  
 So did that Maiden's words appall  
 The guilt-stain'd soul of Oswald Blair :—  
 With trembling limbs and vacant stare

He gaz'd on her,—she seemed to hold,  
Like the famed Pythoness of old,  
His fate within her grasp:—a spell,  
Which all his efforts could not quell,  
Seem'd his heart's inmost fount to freeze,  
And paralyze his faculties.

“Sir Oswald Blair, what means this show,”  
Exclaim'd the Baron de Poitou,  
“Of perturbation; doth thy fire  
Shrink thus before a woman's ire?—  
Daughter, attend,” he sternly said,  
Hath all thy maiden softness fled?—  
Who taught thee, girl, to cross my will?  
At once, if thou my child art still,  
To Oswald Blair resign thine hand,  
Nor dare dispute thy Sire's command.”  
Sir Priest, proceed,” he loudly cried:  
“Sir Oswald Blair, lead forth thy Bride!”

The Knight towards the Maiden sprung,  
His nerves by desperation strung—  
His passions by deep vengeance fann'd—  
And seiz'd, perforce, her struggling hand.  
Just then, forth from a pillar's shade,  
A form, in mantle dark array'd,  
Glided into the dazzling blaze,  
And while his steady, piercing gaze

He bent upon the recreant Blair,  
 He sternly shouted—" Hold !—Forbear !"  
 Amazement seiz'd the startled throng,  
 As to the ground his cloak he flung :—  
 For, lo ! revealed before them stood  
 The far-famed outlaw, Robin Hood !

“ What, ho !” he cried, “ my valiant Knight,  
 Come forth into the honest light.  
 Why shrink ye thus ?—I’ faith, ’twould seem  
 Ye entertain some vacant dream  
 That we before have met. Stand forth,  
 While I proclaim thy sterling worth.  
 Thou wilt not come ?—Then, coward, hear  
 Such words as shall o’erwhelm with fear  
 Thy heart, and prove thy perfidy  
 Before this goodly company.  
 I here proclaim thee traitor !—Aye,  
 Before God’s Holy Host, I say  
 Thou art a villain, who for gold  
 Thy peace of mind—thy soul, hast sold,  
 Who strove by foul, demoniac snares  
 To crush De Lacey’s rightful heirs ;  
 Who plotted murder, and imbu’d  
 A brother’s hand in brother’s blood.  
 I come not ’neath this hallow’d roof  
 Thus to arraign thee without proof.  
 Sir Hildebrand, thou’st falsely said,  
 Hath, blood-stain’d, from his country fled.

That thou hast lied shall soon appear,—  
Behold ! my witnesses are here !”

So saying, from his vest he drew  
A silver hunting horn, and blew  
A startling blast, both loud and long,  
Which through the roof in echoes rung ;  
And entering by a secret way,  
From the south transept, presently  
Rush'd forth a small, but gallant band  
Of Foresters with bows in hand,  
Already strung ; and at their head  
Came Hildebrand and Ethelred.

With mute astonishment the throng  
Beheld :—the beauteous Helen sprung  
Towards her Knight with joy-fraught shriek,  
And senseless fell upon his neck.

“ Oswald,” exclaim'd Sir Hildebrand,  
While loathingly the wretch he scann'd—  
“ False traitor ! too long hath this hand  
And my good falchion strangers been ;  
But now, by yon high Altar's sheen,  
I swear to prove thy vaunted might,—  
I challenge thee to mortal fight,  
And may just God defend the right !”

Awhile Sir Oswald silent gazed



Upon the scene ; then proudly raised  
 His gaunt form to its fullest height,  
 As if concentrating all his might  
 For one last effort. “ What,” he said,  
 “ Hath my ambition, then, been fed  
 By years of bootless hope, to be  
 Crush’d at its climax, thus, by thee ?—  
 De Lacey, mark me : man hath ne’er  
 Exulted yet o’er Oswald Blair,  
 Nor ever shall :—thus, thus I now  
 My vengeance seal, and overthrow  
 Thy triumph at a single blow !”

Forth from its sheath he tore his brand,  
 And rush’d upon Sir Hildebrand ;—  
 But ere the villain’s treacherous hand  
 Could plant the steel, young Ethelred  
 Sprang forward, and struck down the blade.  
 Now wildly glar’d the baffled fiend,  
 His eyes like flaming embers seem’d,  
 As with a shrill, unearthly cry  
 He whirl’d his flashing brand on high,  
 And with a madden’d tiger’s might,  
 Darted upon the youthful Knight.  
 Sir Ethelred stood well prepared,  
 Like lightning his bright blade was bared ;  
 Right gallantly he met his foe,  
 And fiercely dealt him blow for blow.  
 Hotly they fought ; but Lacey’s sword,

Ere long, pass'd thro' Sir Oswald's guard—  
 It pierced his heart—and with a yell  
 Of agony he reeled and fell.  
 And in a crimson, welling flood  
 Around the Altar flow'd his blood.  
 He gave one curse—a gasp—a groan—  
 And Oswald's guilty soul had flown.

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Returning Spring bestrewed the earth with  
                   flowers,  
 And clad in emerald robes the glades and bowers;  
 The lark, on dew gemm'd wing, was soaring high,  
 With jocund song, towards the bright blue sky;  
 And o'er the tranquil, variegated scene  
 Morn shed a charm, soft, smiling, and serene.  
 Upon De Lacey's tower the banner streamed  
 Once more in peace, and thereon proudly gleamed  
 The blended 'scutcheons of De Poitou  
 And proud De Lacey, in the sunbeam's glow.  
 Trouble had faded, like a fearful dream,  
 And happiness, unsullied, reign'd supreme.

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O'ershadowed by the cloister's heavy gloom,  
 A solitary, roughly-chiseled tomb  
 Rear'd its dark crest, and mark'd where, turn'd to  
                   clay,

The bones of the once powerful Oswald lay.  
 A simple cross and sword adorn'd the stone:  
 But no inscription to the spirit flown  
 Memorial of rank or virtues gave—  
 It stood alone—and told the Traitor's grave.

THE END.





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